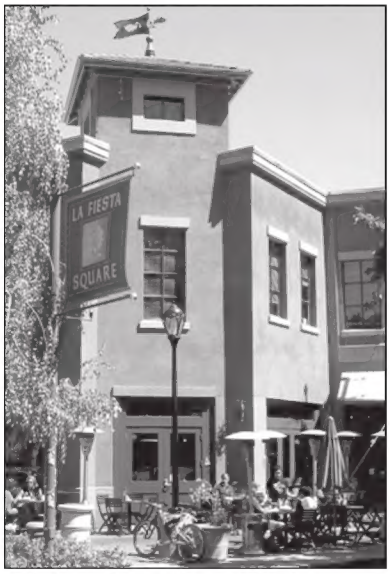
LAFAYETTE VISTAS

Published by the City of Lafayette

Summer 2007
Vol. 17, No.3

THE STRATEGY FOR DOWNTOWN LAFAYETTE

What is downtown Lafayette? Where is it going? What will it become? To answer these questions, the City Council has kicked off one of the most important planning projects in years: developing a comprehensive vision for our downtown. We're calling it **The Strategy for Downtown Lafayette.** When complete, this plan will guide tomorrow's Lafayette such that it remains true to its past and still progresses forward.



The Council cited four important reasons for embarking on this process now:

- **First – the Library.** When the Lafayette Library opens in 2009, its educational and cultural programs will bring the community together in this special place. Developers understand this, and several have begun exploring the potential for sites near the new library. The *Strategy* will ensure that what happens around the Library in the future will complement this new and magnificent building.
- **Second – the General Plan.** The City's General Plan calls for the creation of three distinct areas in the downtown: Core, East End, and West End. The *Strategy* will do so by establishing unique urban design guidelines, locating public parking and other amenities, and analyzing the potential for housing in these areas.
- **Third – Redevelopment.** After ten years in infancy, Lafayette's Redevelopment Agency is reaching maturity. When the Library is completed, the Agency will have significant funds to invest in public projects downtown. Up to $20 million will be available over the next 20 years, with another $30M for affordable housing. There has been no community conversation about how these $50M in Redevelopment funds should be spent.
- **Fourth – New Development.** The *Strategy* will allow Lafayette to be assertive rather than reactive as it considers how the downtown will evolve. In just the last year, staff has received applications or inquiries for four large condominium projects, an office project, and a couple of senior housing projects. Each one of these projects would change the character of their local area and, in totality, they (along with other proposals that come along — and they will come along) will change the character of our downtown. The challenge is to ensure new development is consistent with our past successes and continuously improves our hometown.

Given the new Library, General Plan, $50M in Redevelopment monies, and pressures brought on by new development, the City Council decided that now is the time to develop a long-term strategy for the downtown.

Some sample questions we hope *The Strategy for Downtown Lafayette* will answer:

- How do we keep the really cool stuff while upgrading the not-so-cool stuff?
- Will tomorrow's downtown meet the needs of tomorrow's residents?
- What about parks for downtown residents?
- What is the plan for off-street parking?
- What should we do with the old library?

To answer these and other questions, we have designed a community-based process with loads of opportunities for public input.

The first step was the selection of a consultant team to guide the community in the process. A panel of Lafayette residents and business owners volunteered an entire day to interview urban design consultants. The panel ultimately selected San Francisco-based Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) based on the firm's experience and its understanding of Lafayette. More about WRT can be found on their website at **www.sf.wrtdesign.com**. The same panel of citizen-volunteers will continue to advise WRT throughout the process.

The project is expected to take eighteen months to complete with a series of opportunities for the community to get involved. The first will be a citywide mailing to every household this summer to introduce the project and survey the community for its initial thoughts about the downtown. Other efforts to solicit community input include community workshops, downtown displays, outreach to schools, intercept surveys, and a phone survey of 1,000 residents. More information will be online at **www.lovelafayette.org**.

The cost of consultant services for the process is about $500,000, all of which is paid for by Redevelopment funds. These are funds that cannot, by State law, be used for neighborhood road repair and maintenance or police services.

The *Vistas* will continue to cover this important project as it moves forward, and we hope you will pay attention and participate. It's your downtown!

How Can You Participate?

- Fill out the community-wide survey when it arrives in your mailbox.
- Attend the first community workshop on Sept. 27 (location to be announced).
- Send an email with your thoughts about downtown Lafayette and how it can be improved to: **amerideth@lovelafayette.org.**
- Request to be placed on the mailing list to receive notices of all public meetings by emailing **amerideth@lovelafayette.org.**

Lafayette Youth Commission

By: Youth Commission Member Kirsten Stabler

Let's face it: the original reason I decided to join the Lafayette Youth Commission was to add extra-curricular activities to my college application. However, after participating in and leading events, I learned that the Commission is much more than just something to add to my volunteer list.

The Commission allows Lafayette teens to help others, learn great leadership skills, make friends and take an active role in the community. In my five years of being a member of the Commission I have been able to provide fun events for my peers, work with city officials, and reach out to those in need outside of Lamorinda.

The Commission is composed of 15 Lafayette teenagers in grades 7 to 12, plus a number of associate members. One of our most popular events is our annual Haunted House held in October, the weekend before Halloween. Each year the Haunted House becomes more complex, entertaining, and popular. We begin planning at the start of summer and by September all the Commissioners are putting in many hours on the weekend to produce the biggest and best haunted house ever. In the past the themes were haunted school, fairy tales gone wrong, and haunted castle. We have already begun working on this year's movie themed haunted house.

The Youth Commission also plans dances for middle school students including booking the DJ, designing decorations, and asking local vendors for donations. This year the Commission hopes to revive the Ace of Clubs concerts with a new name, new bands, and a new location – the roller hockey rink which will be completed this fall. Profit from these events allows the Commission to give back to Lafayette by donating to youth-oriented causes such as buying a new scoreboard for the Stanley Middle School gym, supporting the Lafayette Library and Learning Center and being one of the top donors to the Lamorinda Skate Park

In addition to helping improve the lives of Lafayette youth, the Commission helps people outside of Lafayette by participating in the Adopt-a-Family program at Christmas and donating money and time to the Child Abuse Prevention Council. Last spring Commissioners traveled to San Francisco to spend time with the elderly.

Although I have only one more year to serve, I hope to make it my best year yet. This experience has taught me many great skills that I will use my entire life. The Commission really is so much more than just another thing to add to a college application; not only did it positively change my life, I hope it changed the lives of those we touched as well.

Not the type of #1 ranking Lafayette wants:

Unsafe Driving Speed No. 1 Factor in Collisions, Four Years in a Row

Lafayette has schools that are highly ranked, sports teams that are champions and restaurants in the Chronicle's Top 100. Also #1 in Lafayette: Driving at unsafe speeds as the cause of car crashes. Of the almost 500 accidents occurring over the last four years, unsafe speed was by far the most common factor cited in these incidents causing over one quarter of all the reported traffic collisions. These accidents inflict financial, physical, and mental wounds on all involved, sometimes even the innocent bystander. This is a #1 ranking we don't need.

But it doesn't need to be this way. The City of Lafayette in partnership with the other Lamorinda jurisdictions and schools has initiated the "Get in the swing of summer...**SLOW DOWN LAMORINDA!**" anti-speeding campaign. The campaign combines targeted enforcement on major streets with education and outreach to remind all of us to take the pedal off the metal and slow down. And although this campaign targeted the summer months, traffic safety is important no matter the season, so visit the City's website at **www.ci.lafayette.ca.us** for tips for all ages and to sign the Lamorinda Safe Driving Pledge.

TAKE THE PEDAL OFF THE METAL!

	# of Reported Collisions	# of Collisions Caused by Driving at an Unsafe Speed
2006 (9 months)	72	20
2005	123	32
2004	126	39
2003	160	47

The City plans to keep safe driving at the forefront of people's minds in other ways too. You'll begin to see "**Slow Down Lamorinda**" bumper stickers displayed at gas pumps throughout Lafayette. They are also available free of charge at the City's offices while supplies last. Residents have staged anti-speeding rallies in various neighborhoods to remind drivers to slow down. Local schools have participated in raising awareness of students and parents by distributing traffic safety information. But it shouldn't end there. You can join this community-wide effort to make sure that Lafayette's quality of life remains number one and not our accident statistics. **SLOW DOWN Lamorinda!**

From the City Manager's Notebook

Lafayette Road Bond Fails Again

In June, for the second time in three years, a measure to repair Lafayette's crumbling roads narrowly failed to garner the required 2/3 voter approval. This time round, depending on how you count it, the proposition lost by just 209 or 623 votes (either 209 people needed to switch from a "no" to a "yes" vote, or 623 new yes voters needed to show up). And with that, the City was once again stymied in its quest to solve Lafayette's longest-running solution-resistant problem.

In the aftermath of the election, supporters of Measure C seemed not to be disappointed so much as frustrated. Frustrated because a clear majority of Lafayette's voters want to tax themselves to fix local roads – and the movement appears to be growing. In 2004, 58% of the voters supported a road bond. On June 5th, 63% of the voters supported the road bond. Though six out of ten voters want to solve the problem, California's laws prevent them from doing so.

The 2,092 voters who rejected the measure comprise just 8% of Lafayette's population, and less than 15% of Lafayette's registered voters. Say what you will, vote how you like, but there's no doubting that an awfully small percentage of the population is making big decisions for our townspeople, the appearance of their streets, their property values, and their quality of life.

We're particularly sympathetic to the estimated 4,000 people who live on Lafayette's failed streets and for whom now there is no solution on the horizon.

And, though they may be well intentioned, the people who voted no because they believe that Lafayette should just tighten its belt to solve the problem must be misinformed. They must not understand that the City has an estimated $42M in deferred road maintenance but receives less than $3M annually in property taxes. Do the math, study the budget: the City's revenues don't come close to providing what's needed for Lafayette to fix its roads.

What's next? It's still too early to tell, and the City Council will certainly need time to analyze the results and consider their options. Though many theories abound regarding why Measure C failed and how Lafayette should proceed, any new direction should be informed by data.

Having said that, there are at least two obvious but divergent paths that the community could pursue. The first would conclude that, given the special election timing, the well-run campaign, and the immense effort, time, and private contributions, this is as good as it gets (for a while at least; until, perhaps, the roads get appreciably worse). This option would argue that voters have now spoken twice and delivered the message that, under the rules of the game set forth by California law, they will not approve a tax measure to support residential roads in Lafayette. The City should thus (to quote the Beatles) "let it be" and move on to address the many other issues it faces.

Others will find a glimmer of hope in the June results. Measure C lost by just a few hundred votes, with a clear majority of the voters asking the City Council to levy a rather hefty 30-year tax on them. That's pretty remarkable and it's up 5% from the 2004 results. These optimists may decide that – perhaps – people are coming round to the conclusion that this is their city; that they are its stewards; and that if they don't take responsibility for it, nobody else will. Sometimes through adversity we grow stronger.

Council Approves Sign Ordinance Revisions

Stimulated by The Crosses of Lafayette and the controversy that the installation has created, the City Council has amended the City's sign ordinance to limit the total signage allowed on parcels in residential zones. The Council, however, chose not to limit the number of signs people can have on their property.

Because The Crosses are "grandfathered", the proposed changes to the city sign law would have no effect on the Deer Hill Road installation. The revised law would, however, prevent such displays in the future.

According to the new rules, residential property owners are allowed to display up to 32 square feet of permanent signage with the proviso that each sign not exceed 3 square feet.

Homeowners are also allowed to display 80 square feet of temporary signage, provided that each sign is not larger than six square feet, and that these temporary signs are not up for more than 90 days.

Finally, recognizing people's needs to display election signage and holiday decorations, residents can display 180 square feet of signage for an extra 45 days each year, so long as each individual sign does not exceed 12 square feet.

The City Council introduced the revised policy in May and, after a review by the Planning Commission, approved it on June 11th.

Lafayette Goes Clubbin'!

Hey clubbers, we know you're out there! Yes, that's right, we're looking at you!

Knitters, Rotarians, scrapbookers, and singers of Lafayette unite!

Do you belong to a great Lafayette club that you want others to know about and maybe even join? Have you ever wanted to start a Scrabble club or a Travel club?

Now's your chance. The next issue of the *Vistas* will feature a section devoted to The Clubs of Lafayette. If you want to advertise your club to the city, drop an email to Tracy Robinson, Editor, *Lafayette Vistas* at **trobinson@lovelafayette.org**, with the name of your club, a description of what it does, when it meets, and how to join. We'll do what we can to help with your outreach.

Seventeen Really Cool Things about Lafayette

- Meeting neighbors while walking the Lafayette–Moraga Trail
- Home to a nationally-recognized youth jazz education program dedicated to promoting intergenerational jazz performance opportunities
- Acalanes Union High School District ranks #2 in California based on 2006 API scores
- Town Hall Theatre: oldest continuously operating theater in Contra Costa County, featuring original plays, homegrown talent and even stars from New York
- Highway 24 is a scenic corridor, it has no billboards
- The Roundup: more than 70 years as the East Bay's best watering hole
- Three Lafayette restaurants feted by San Francisco Chronicle's listing of the Top 100 restaurants in the Bay Area and the only city in Contra Costa County with more than one restaurant on the list
- A warm glazed donut from Johnny's
- Pétanque
- A City Council with five degrees from MIT, three from Cal, two from Stanford, and one each from Hastings and Yale
- Lafayette Reservoir: 550-acre wilderness preserve located just ½ mile from downtown, with a lake, fishing, paddleboats, walking trails, a tot-lot designed by and for kids, and it's own iconic tower

- Lafayette Park Hotel: the only 5-star hotel in the East Bay
- Some of the strictest land-use ordinances in the State, leaving our green ridgelines and hilltops unencumbered by monstrous homes
- The only full-sized outdoor roller rink in the East Bay (coming soon!)
- Lafayette Plaza: dedicated by Elam and Margaret Brown to the townsfolk in 1864 – 15 years after California's statehood – making it one of the State's oldest public parks
- The Wayside Inn Thrift Store: when you buy cool stuff, the money is used to buy new clothes for underprivileged school kids in other parts of the County
- The Pony Express ran through Lafayette for 19 months, beginning in 1860.

Around Town

Aug-Oct **TOWN HALL THEATRE – Bleacher Bums: 8/16–10/14** • A nine-inning comedy! One afternoon in the bleachers of Wrigley Field during a Cubs/Cards game may prove to be the turning point in the lives of some lovable losers. Alternating with "The Weir." **The Weir: 8/30–10/27** • Grab a pint and listen to some ghost stories in an Irish pub. The lovely new village resident has a chilling tale of her own! And yes, we will be pouring Guinness for the run of this show. Box Office 283-1557 or **www.thtc.org**

Sept 15-16 **12TH ANNUAL ART & WINE FESTIVAL** – Arts and crafts booths, food, wine, micro-brewed beer, and live music. Downtown Lafayette. Call the Chamber of Commerce at 284-7404 for more information.

Oct 28 **LAFAYETTE RESERVOIR RUN** – Mark your calendars so you don't miss out on Northern California's most scenic fun run! There is a 10K course, as well as shorter, flat 3-5K courses for walkers and "the stroller brigade." Call the Chamber of Commerce at 284-7404 for more information or visit the website at **www.lafayettechamber.org**

City Directory

For Council Members call: **284-1968**

Council Members

Carol Federighi	**Mayor**
Mike Anderson	**Vice Mayor**
Brandt Andersson	**Council Member**
Carl Anduri	**Council Member**
Don Tatzin	**Council Member**

Messages to **all** Council Members:
cityhall@lovelafayette.org

Administration

General Reception and	**284-1968**
Steven Falk, City Manager	**Fax: 284-3169**
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	**299-3227**
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Srv. Mgr.	**299-3213**
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	**299-3210**

Community Development

Ann Merideth, Director	**299-3218**
Tony Coe, Engineering Srv. Mgr.	**284-1951**
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Srv. Mgr.	**284-1976**
Ron Lefler, Public Works Srv. Mgr.	**299-3214**
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	**299-3259**

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Hansen, Program Mgr.	**299-3216**
	Or 299-3215

Parks, Trails and Recreation **284-2232**

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Senior Services	**284-5050**
Teen Programs	**284-5815**

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	**911**
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	**284-5010**
Police Business Office:	**283-3680**

Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3232 X 2205

Fax	**284-3169**
Address	**3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210, Lafayette, CA 94549**
Website:	**www.ci.lafayette.ca.us**

E-MAIL: Council/staff members can be reached via e-mail using this address format:
First Initial + Last Name @lovelafayette.org
Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

City of Lafayette
3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210
Lafayette, CA 94549

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lafayette, CA
Permit No. 161

Postal Customer
Lafayette, CA 94549

Printed on Recycled Paper